

Message Text

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PAGE 01 VICTOR 00454 041636Z
ACTION PM-05

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00
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FM AMEMBASSY VICTORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 484
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L VICTORIA 454

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EWWT, SE, US
SUBJECT: REQUEST TO TRANSPORT FUEL TO DIEGO GARCIA

1. SEYCHELLES' PRESIDENT F. A. RENE ASKED ME TO MEET PRIVATELY WITH HIM AT STATE HOUSE AUGUST 3 TO DISCUSS FOLLOWING "IMPORTANT MATTER." RENE SAID THAT GOS IS PLANNING TO PURCHASE ONE OR TWO SMALL TANKERS (2,500 TO 3,000 TONS EACH) FROM NORWAY WITH SOFT FINANCING FROM NORAD. HE SAID REASON BEHIND DECISION TO ACQUIRE OWN TANKERS WAS TO GIVE SEYCHELLES CAPABILITY TO TRANSPORT OWN POL PRODUCTS. RENE EXPLAINED THAT SEYCHELLES NEEDED OWN VESSELS BECAUSE PRESENT CARRIER (MAHE SHIPPING) HAS BEEN UNRELIABLE AND "EXPLOITATIVE." HE CITED INSTANCE SEVERAL MONTHS AGO WHEN COUNTRY HAD ONLY 14-HOUR FUEL SUPPLY BECAUSE MAHE SHIPPING HAD DIVERTED ITS TANKER ON A RUN TO PERSIAN GULF.

2. RENE SAID THAT NORWEGIANS HAD ADVISED HIM THAT EACH TANKER IS CAPABLE OF TRANSPORTING 50,000 TONS OF FUEL PER YEAR. SINCE SEYCHELLES PRESENT REQUIREMENT IS 50,000 TONS, ONE VESSEL WILL NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT CAPACITY TO SATISFY LOCAL REQUIREMENTS FOR VERY LONG. NORWEGIANS RECOMMENDED GOS PURCHASE TWO TANKERS WHICH WOULD BE ECONOMICALLY VIABLE VENTURE IF SEYCHELLES WERE ALSO TO BECOME CARRIER TO OTHER LOCATION IN
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PAGE 02 VICTOR 00454 041636Z

REGION. ACCORDING RENE, NORWEGIANS SUGGESTED DIEGO GARCIA WHICH THEY ESTIMATED PRESENTLY REQUIRES 30,000 TONS PER YEAR. RENE SAID CONTRACT FOR DEIGO GARCIA BUSINESS PRESENTLY BEING SUPPLIED BY SEA TRANSPORT FIRM FROM SINGAPORE.

3. RENE SAID HE WAS CERTAIN SEYCHELLES WOULD BE ABLE TO TRANSPORT FUEL AT LOWER COST AND THAT AWARDDING CONTRACT TO

GOS WOULD BE IMPORTANT WAY IN WHICH USG COULD ASSIST
SEYCHELLES' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

4. I TOLD RENE THAT I HAD NO INFORMATION ON SUBJECT AND
SAID I WOULD CONVEY HIS REQUEST TO DEPARTMENT. HE SAID
CONSTRUCTION (EXPECTED TO TAKE 9 MONTHS) IS ABOUT TO BEGIN
ON FIRST TANKER AND THAT DECISION WHETHER TO GO AHEAD WITH
TWO SHIP DEAL WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE IN NEXT FEW MONTHS.
SECOND SHIP WOULD BE IN SERVICE 12 MONTHS AFTER DECISION
MADE TO PURCHASE.

5. COMMENT: THIS IS FIRST TIME SINCE INDEPENDENCE THAT
SEYCHELLES GOVERNMENT HAS MADE FORMAL REQUEST FROM USG.
EMBASSY NOT IN POSITION TO COMMENT ON COST OR OTHER FACTORS
INVOLVED. WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT REACTION TO ENABLE
US TO RESPOND TO PRESIDENTIAL REQUEST.
MATTSON

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